

Hereford Heckler



The bulletin of Hereford Solidarity League
Freedom • Equality • Community
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Free/Donation

WE ARE ALL MIGRANT LABOUR, LET'S FIGHT TOGETHER

As we go to press, unions are recommending that striking oil workers return to work after a deal was reached in the Lindsey foreign contractor dispute.

The strikes followed energy company Total's offer of a new project to Italian firm IREM, which brought its own workforce and refused to employ locals.

Media coverage has played up the nationalist character of the strike and the crude demand of 'British jobs for British workers'. But workers involved in the dispute have been quick to point out that foreign workers aren't their target.

John Cummins, who has recently been made redundant, said: "I've worked in Cardiff and Barry docks for 11 years ... I



think the whole country should go on strike as we're losing all British industry. But I've got nothing against foreign workers. I can't

blame them for going where the work is."

Under capitalism, the need to find work makes us all migrants, whether we travel abroad or just to another town, something that many British engineering workers—who frequently work overseas themselves—have pointed out.

Among the demands from the strikers were: government investment in apprenticeships; that all immigrant labour be unionised and links made with unions on the continent; and for all workers in the UK to be covered by the national construction industry agreement.

One thing's for sure—playing British workers off against Italian workers, and vice versa, only strengthens the hand of the bosses in ruling us all!

The number of people on the council's housing lists hit 5,266 at the beginning of the year. With demand for cheap homes set to soar in 2009, the Heckler makes our call:

MORE HOMES NOW!

MORE THAN 5,000 PEOPLE are now on waiting lists for social housing in the county—with only 15 homes becoming available each week!

This figure is set to rise as the recession digs in, with redundancies and short-time work inevitably leading to house repossession and homelessness.

Councillors are admitting that we are in a 'grim' situation, admitting that they are not doing much to deal with the problem.

Of the target 250 houses to be built in Herefordshire each year, only 35% are to be 'affordable accommodation', but even these will be unaffordable to a lot of Herefordshire people. Renting is now becoming a popular option but would-be tenants run the risk of poor standards and high prices from private landlords. The council's inability to provide a basic human need to their electorate shows the poor deal we are getting.

Squatting is making a reappearance across the country as more and more people are finding themselves homeless. The media

often portray squatters as dirty, drug addicted 'scroungers', but the truth is that many are ordinary people that have taken the housing problem into their own hands.

In the 1950s, Britain had thousands of squatters and homeless families who reacted to the government's failings by living in disused military barracks. Similar situations arose in the 1980s with unemployment and the economic crisis hitting many working class people hard. Squatting is certainly an option, with an estimated one million empty properties across Britain—enough to house the homeless population five times over!

Unfortunately for many people living in rented

accommodation, some landlords will take advantage of the vulnerable situation many tenants find themselves in. Getting yourself in a situation where you are being exploited or mistreated by a landlord can be a terrible experience. But by letting others know of your situation, you may find that they have experience of a similar situation and may be able to help. The key to overcoming problems like these is sticking together and not feeling intimidated or alone. Get friends or family together and put pressure on the landlord to make improvements or let them know what you are entitled to!

A situation like this has no single solution and if the council continue with their failure to act then change will be slow. Most importantly more houses need to be built now. Demand for social housing is going to increase dramatically over the next 12 months and we are already in an appalling situation. At their current rate, it will take the council more than six and half years to house everyone currently on their waiting lists for a new home; nothing short of a disgrace!

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

- Find out your rights as a tenant by visiting www.adviceguide.org.uk
- Get in touch with your stories of Herefordshire's housing madness. Email us at kay.bulstreet@hotmail.co.uk



HELEN HECKLER

■ A warm Hereford welcome goes out to Prince Charles, who recently visited to mark the start of the Cathedral Close project. It is fitting here that we think of all the wealth our dear Prince surrounds himself with and his many royal palaces that we pay for and then we remember all of us who are struggling with mortgage repayments, credit card debts and gas bills. We see all the butlers, valets and guards he employs to care for his every wish whilst millions of us are worrying for our jobs; and we see no one caring for us!

■ Oh and Charles, tell your son to watch his mouth! Prince Harry obviously thinks calling a mate 'paki' is alright. Well we don't. Some local lobotomy-experiment-gone-wrong even wrote to the *Hereford Journal* to defend him. "It's ok, it's what people from Pakistan are called." No it's not, it's racist abuse, usually directed at anyone but Pakistanis: Greeks, Sri Lankans, Herefordians with a suntan! You can't do anything about your race or the country you're born in, and why should you anyway! Harry is much the same except he was born a scumbag ... and that's how he'll stay!

■ "The 'Iron Lady' dies at age of 91," reports the *Hereford Times* at the end of January. Oh no, "the 'Iron Lady' of Leominster dies at age of 91" ... I almost cracked open the champagne then.

■ The global economy is the worst it's been since the 1930s and, naturally, people are angry—riots have broken out in many east European countries, millions took part in a general strike in France and the Icelandic government has been kicked out after mass protests.

Striking workers have occupied their factories in Ukraine and Northern Ireland, while wildcats strikes have recently swept the UK. Nice one. More like this please.

To the barricades!

Helen xx

PS – love, hugs and wet French kisses to all my little sweetpeas out there ;)

RESISTANCE TO ARMS TRADE GROWS

In a society where people are truly valued there is no place in our towns for companies that make profits from making indiscriminate weaponry, killing and mutilating civilians.

In the recent Gaza assault 300 children died and thousands were injured. The arms industry in the UK is subsidised by government. So voting won't change this situation, but what can we do?

In Bristol, last December, anti-arms trade campaigners set up camp on the office roof of Raytheon, the forth-largest arms company in the world. They manufacture shells loaded with cluster bombs and depleted uranium tipped 'bunker busters' bombs, amongst other weapons. The campaigners erected a tent, made banners and used megaphones to advertise Raytheon's dirty business. They stayed up on the roof for a month through some of the coldest weather in years. One protestor, an ex-British army soldier, said: "As civilians we're increasingly being controlled and criminalised. Yet at the same time the government sends our troops to fight illegal wars against relatively weak third-world countries. And no one, at



Campaigners on the office roof of Raytheon in Bristol. They stayed up there for a month

all, controls the global arms industry, which is producing the most evil and barbaric weaponry imaginable ... Entire countries, such as Iraq, are laid waste with toxic chemicals and depleted uranium waste. And I know countless young soldiers returning from duty who are permanently poisoned by the chemicals and the psychological damage. I've seen too much in my time and I'm totally sickened" *

At the time of writing over a dozen student bodies around the country have occupied University buildings demanding that their institutions release statement condemning the attack on Gaza, sever links with Israel and arms companies who are invited to job fairs.†

Campaigners in the south east recently climbed the fence at EDO/MBM/ITT Brighton and proceeded to 'decommission' the factory. They destroyed computers that are used to facilitate the arming of F16 jets, used by Israel and the US. The decommissioners reportedly caused £250,000 worth of damage before being carted off to the nick.

However, recent case law has proven that preventing war crimes is not a crime itself. In June 2008, by a unanimous verdict of the jury, the Raytheon Nine were found not guilty of three counts of criminal damage (worth £350,000) at the Raytheon offices in Derry, Northern Ireland in August 2006.

One of the Brighton decommissioners said: "If you hear the sound of a child being brutalised in the house next door and you rush in to smash the door down and save the child, should you be charged with breaking and entering?"

* See raytheonout.wordpress.com

† See www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2009/01/419762

MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

With a ceasefire now in place in Gaza, the Israeli/Palestinian conflict will once again slip from the front pages of the national newspapers.

But for the ordinary people of the region, life continues. Israeli people live in constant fear of rocket and bomb attacks from Palestinian terrorists and Palestinian people live under an unbearable siege that is comparable to apartheid in South Africa. This siege is imposed by the terrorist government of Israel.

With the Palestinian and Israeli governments showing complete contempt for their people and international governments, including the British, busy making money from the conflict through arms sales, it is down to the ordinary people to make a real difference.

People such as the surgeon from Hereford County Hospital who gives her time to teach Palestinian students in the Al-Quds University Medical School in Jerusalem.

People such as those who travel from across the world to the occupied territories and assist Palestinians during the harvests. The olive harvest is an important source of income that the Israeli Army (IDF) actively

tries to stop. Just the presence of these activists can reduce the attacks by the IDF.

People who actively boycott Israeli goods and services. This simple act can have a major effect on the Israeli economy. Just look at the effect the boycott had on Apartheid South Africa.

People like the Israeli organisation Anarchists Against the Wall. These are people who risk their lives and imprisonment by using direct action to stop the construction of the apartheid wall that cuts through Palestinian land.

As with all conflicts it's not the rulers who suffer, it's those people who are being ruled, in this case both Arab and Jew. Writing letters to MPs does nothing to change the situation as they are part of the problem. Real change comes through the actions of those people mentioned here. It's not a matter of taking sides but a matter of showing support and solidarity for those who are suffering.

For more information visit
<http://electronicintifada.net/>
<http://www.awalls.org/>

OVERPRICED AND OVER-CROWDED: TRAIN SERVICES NOT FIT FOR CATTLE

Major rail companies announced further price rises in January, this time by an average of 6%. These rises are nicely timed at the start of a recession, when most other services are cutting prices to attract customers. This should come as no surprise though; rail companies have had a history of greed and misconduct.



Herded in and herded out for £££:

A contender for the new cattle market?

Local rail providers Arriva Trains Wales are no different. Short journeys in the county, such as Hereford–Leominster or Hereford–Ledbury, will now cost the pricey sum of £4.20 and £5.00 respectively. They argue that these rises are necessary to pay for improvements that will benefit rail users, but they really seem

to be missing the point. They have refused improvements in the past that would guarantee greater numbers of people using the service!

Some rush hour trains in the county are so overcrowded that people are unable to get on them at all, being left stranded for an hour for the next one. All that needs to be done is to fit an extra carriage and many people have raised this issue with them. The point of view of the customers and users of the service seem to be ignored, with many complaints being tossed to the side without further explanation.

The government are eagerly advising people to use public transport, rightfully saying that it will help the environment and traffic problems. However, they seem to be turning a blind eye to the problems that turn people away from using public transport, and to the poor practise of transport providers. Price increases are going to hit customers in the pocket and at a time of pay freezes and growing unemployment people are not going to be able to afford to use these forms of travel. This is a very cheeky move from companies like Arriva, who made a more than healthy rise in profits of 40% last year.

Arriva Trains – take note and do something! Or we will have to.

DEATH TO THE ESG!

First came the news that the Edgar Street Grid development was being put on hold, with a car park temporarily replacing the soon-to-be-demolished cattle market.

Now a top associate with ESG Herefordshire has pulled out of talks saying the project should now be completely scrapped. Commercial agent Jon Turner has also advised his clients to end all talks with ESG Herefordshire and the council.

Are these the first signs that the ESG development is dying a slow death? We very much hope so!

Many similar projects up and down the country are now being shelved because of the recession. Why can't Herefordshire Council have the same sense with the ESG development?

But the state of the economy is really irrelevant—the people of Hereford don't want this project to go ahead, recession or no recession.

From the start the Edgar Street Grid was never about bringing real improvements to Hereford; plans for new houses, the restoration of the old canal and talk of a university have all essentially been sweeteners to keep the locals onside. The core of the project is really about retail; selling space to chain stores that will turn our city even more into a clone of every other in the country. If we want big name stores, we'll go to Birmingham or Cardiff for a day out—some of us quite like



Roger Phillips looked on over the market:

“one day, this will be a big, useless car park.”

.....

the quaintness of our small city just as it is.

However, we're not blind and we know there's room for improvements here, but they're not solved by filling our city with more profit-grabbing multinationals.

And how can Herefordshire Council justify spending millions on more shops that are destined to stay empty when over 5,000 people are on local housing waiting lists?! There is a severe lack of social housing in the county and instead of tackling the problem the council just keep dangling shiny pennies in our face: “look at the Debenhams, look at the Waitrose”. We're not interested!

No more shops! No more chain stores sucking the life out of our town! No more profit-hungry developers! Death to the Edgar Street Grid!

TRANSPARENT MEDIA?

In this age of mass media it's often difficult to know who you can trust for accurate news. The BBC is state funded, and all mainstream media organisations are run and funded by corporations, which exist to make profits. Both the BBC and the other media organisations have their own agendas to promote. This often results in these organisations providing disinformation, half-truths, or completely ignoring certain issues that could potentially rock the foundations of society.

It's reassuring to know then that a group of Herefordians are doing their bit to redress this media imbalance. Guerilla Cinema has been showing grassroots films at various venues around Herefordshire for the past two years.

“We started showing films to share the stories that we felt were being ignored by the mainstream media,” a spokesperson told the *Heckler*. “Once you start looking into these subjects you find a different perspective on issues than those portrayed on the TV and in the papers. All our events are free to attend as we want the cinema to be accessible to everyone.”

Guerilla Cinema is part of the growing independent media, or ‘indymedia’, scene. Indymedia organisations that work without corporate, financial or party political influences have flourished since the late 1990s. This is a response to a perceived lack of fair reporting and with the increasingly widespread availability of the internet.

Indymedia web sites have spread across the world. Individual people and grassroots (community based) organisations upload their experience of events. This removes the divide between journalists and the audience. This type of reporting is essential in providing open discussion on social and environment justice issues.

If, like us, you feel you're not getting your money's worth for your licence fee then turn off your television and come a watch a free film in a public place with Guerilla Cinema.

For more information visit guerillacinema.wordpress.com

Next Screening

REEL NEWS

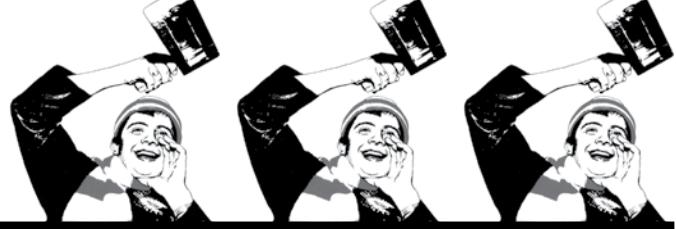
Thursday 12th March, 7.45pm

Riverside Centre for Learning (old WRVS),
Vicarage Road*

London filmmakers visit Hereford to screen short films

*Near to St James Primary School/Victoria Bridge

Sport



SOME PEOPLE ARE GAY, GET OVER IT!

Last November the Rugby Football League became the first national sporting governing body to sign up to an anti-homophobia campaign. It is hoped that this move, seen by gay rights campaign group Stonewall as 'ground-breaking', will be followed by other sporting bodies.

At last years Olympic games, of the 10,708 athletes that took part only 10 were openly gay. A study carried out by Bath University found that between 2% and 10% of people are homosexual. If this is the case, then why is it that there are so few openly gay sportsmen and women?

At present the only professional footballer to come out as gay is Justin Fashanu back in 1990. During his football career he received homophobic abuse from fellow players, fans and even his manager. He received very little support from the FA. Sadly the pressure of being openly gay in a macho sport became too much and he committed suicide in 1998. Not all sportsmen have suffered the same treatment. Australian Rugby League star Ian Roberts came out in 1995. The reaction of the sporting world and the Australian media was one of support.

But the media is not always that supportive. The negative comments aimed towards female tennis as being a 'gay sport' is an example of this.



Australian Rugby League star Ian Roberts

This is a difficult issue to tackle, as many sportsmen and women are understandably afraid to come out, fearing the consequences. If this is going to change it needs to come from society as a whole and we need to be more tolerant of differences, and as fans, to judge by ability not sexuality.

The lead taken by the RFL must be followed. Groups such as the Gay Football Supporters' Network also have a part to play in making this positive change. The GFSN aim to "promote the support and participation of gay men and women in football".

The RFL campaign begins this month and includes the setting up of a forum for gay players and staff. Posters and logos will be carrying a slogan, which we at *Heckler HQ* fully support, **'some people are gay, get over it!'**

FAO Len Dykes...

What is the problem with Millwall supporters? As a Hereford fan I was angered to hear that during the Hereford v Millwall match back in January, a section of the away fans racially abused one of their own players!



Lewis Grabban (right) celebrates with Chris Hackett last year

Young striker Lewis Grabban was on the receiving end of racist chanting by a small minority of the Millwall faithful. Grabban was quoted as saying "it is something that I have to deal with as part of being a footballer". Well sorry Lewis, I disagree. You shouldn't have to put up with it. What the hell were the Hereford stewards doing as this was going on? It is the responsibility of Safety Officer Len Dykes to make sure his staff tackles these problems and in this case they failed to do so. They were quick enough to deal with a streaker two weeks before and I'm damn sure that if a player can hear this abuse then the stewards can too. Get it sorted Len.

THANKS, BUT NO THANKS

There was a big sigh of relief at *Heckler HQ* this week when Australian cricketer Darren Lehmann stated that he won't be taking the vacant England coaching job. We are all relieved that this bloke, who referred to Sri Lankan players as 'black c***s', won't be joining the England set up. You have to wonder how England players and fans would have felt if this racist half-wit had ended up in the job.

'THE WHITES ARE STAYING UP'

Now it's easy to be pessimistic or—if you're one of those 6,000 fans who were at the final game last year's season—easy to give up on your club. But here at *Heckler HQ* we are never pessimistic, and never give up on our club!

Hot on the heels of the glorious 5-0 victory over League One high-flyers, Oldham Athletic, we are looking forward (albeit slightly nervously) to the next few games at Edgar Street. The Bulls need every point they can get to stay in League One, and we need to get behind them! Well ... what else you gonna do on a Saturday?! Hopefully we will be reporting some good news in the next issue.

**Hereford
Heckler**



NOW ON THE INTERNET!

herefordheckler.wordpress.com

INCLUDING ALL BACK ISSUES

IF YOU LIKED THE HECKLER...

Check out the many excellent alternative news sources around the country, including:

- **SchNEWS** – stirring it up since 1994 (schnews.org.uk)
- **Bristol Indymedia** – do-it-yourself newswire (bristol.indymedia.org)
- **Gagged** – anarchist newsletter from south Wales (southwalesanarchists.org)
- **Natterjack Press** – publishers of radical books (natterjackpress.co.uk)

